WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

National Postal Policy

2564. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the formulation of a National Postal Policy undertaken in 1992 has been completed;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons for the delay; and

(d) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) to (d) A formal document in Coiporating the National Postal Policy is yet to be finalised. However, the Department of Posts has been following consistent Policy in the matter of development and operation of postal services in the country. The salient features of the policy of the department are indicated below.

In the matter of expension of postal network in the rural areas, the department's policy provides for substantial subsidy in respect of new post offices—66% of anticipated cost in normal rural area and 85% of the anticipated cost in hilly, tribal and inaccessible rea as well as allows the maximum permissible annual loss to the extent of Rs. 2400/- in normal rural area and Rs. 4800/- in tribal and hilly areas in the matter of upgradation of rural Branch Post Office into a Departmental Sub Post Office. 8041 villages including Gram Panchayats in the country, where opening of a post office is justified according to population and distance parameters, are still without postal counter facilities and the focus of department's policy now is to provide new post offices in these villages. In extending postal facilities in the urban area financial viability is given greater importance in the department's policy and newly opened post office is required to be self-supporting by the end of its first year of existence. Parameter in respect of distance from existing post office is also appropriately related to urban conditions where the density of population is much higher than in the rural area.

As regards delivery service in rural area, the norm is to deliver articles from branch Post Office on the same day when these are received unless there are constraints of transmission arrangements. In the urban area, all departmental delivery offices provide atleast one delivery per day for both ordinary and accountable articles, which are supplemented by more than one delivery in a large number of urban post offices, having regard to the volume of articles and the time of their receipt.

In the matter of all mail transmission, the department's policy is to gradually introduce automated systems in the large nodal centres for speedy and effective mail processing. The first step in this direction has been taken with the setting up of the automated mail processing centres at Mumbai and Chennai respectively.

The department is also pursuing the policy of optimising the benefits of the post office as an outlet of social distribution system by performing a variety of agency functions like small savings schemes of the Government, payment of pension for Railway Pensioners and Coal Miners, as also operation of the Postal Life Insurance Organisation.

The department's policy of modernising the postal service lays emphasis on counter services where application of computer based technology is aimed at achieving greater customer satisfaction through more efficient and responsive counter service and enhancing employee

motivation through improved work-environment. Provision of new value added services for the business/ professional segment of customers is also in focus for optimising the upgraded retailing capacity of modernised postal counters. Computer based technologies are also being introduced in other areas of activity like financial services, PLI, Inventory control and Speed Post Service.

The department's policy of modernisation through induction of new technology is being achieved on the basis of an extensive training programme aimed at upgrading the skills of its employees.

The department is also seeking to segment its areas of activities catering for business and ..commercial sector and those for meeting universal service obligation with a view to improving quality of service and generation of revenue.

Telephone Exchange at Atgaon in Maharashtra

2565. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received a communication requesting Government for establishment of a Telephone Exchange at Atgaon in Thane district of Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the present status of the proposal; and

(c) by when the action is expected to be initiated?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is registered demand of 145 new telephone connections at Atgaon.

(c) A new electronic telephone exchange is planned to be opened during 1997-98.

Opening of New Post Offices in Maharashtra

2566. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications for opening new Post Offices in Maharashtra pending as on 31st December, 1996;

(b) the reasons for the pendency; and

(c) by when the new Post Offices are expected to be opened in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) The number of applications for opening new post offices in Maharashtra pending as on 31st December, 1996 is 188.

(b) The reason for pendency is that the justification of these post offices is being examined at various levels.

(c) The Post Offices justified will be considered for opening subject to Plan targets and availability of resources.

Surrender of amount by Bihar Telecom Circle

2567. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bihar Telecom Circle surrendered huge amounts meant for improvement of the telcom system in the State because of its non-utilisation;

(b) if so, the details thereof stating the amount surrendered; and

(c) the reasons for non-utilisation of the fund?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Bihar Telecom Circle has surrendered Rs. 37.07 crores only out of the fund allocated for 1995-96.

(c) The amount of Rs. 37.07 crores could not be used owing to non-receipt of